



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Office of the Secretary

Assistant Secretary for Health
Office of Public Health and Science
Washington D.C. 20201

JAN 30 2007

TO: Inspector General, Department of Health and Human Services

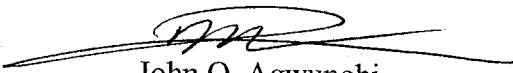
FROM: Assistant Secretary for Health

SUBJECT: Inspector General's Report (OEI-09-06-00030) —**INFORMATION**

I am writing to express my appreciation for your report entitled "The Commissioned Corps' Response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita" (OEI-09-06-00030). The evaluation conducted by your staff included interviews with a stratified random sampling of officers, review of our databases, and interviews with members of our Department and those state health officials we served during the response. From the design, as well as the findings and conclusions, it is evident that much careful and thoughtful consideration was given throughout the evaluation. I concur with the findings and the recommendations as to how the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service (Corps) can improve its future responses to public health emergencies.)

The recommendations of the report mirror many of the preparedness and response areas we are addressing as part of the business practice improvements within the Office of Force Readiness and Deployment and our comprehensive Transformation efforts. We are developing more effective deployment-related training programs for our officers, improving contact/communication mechanisms with officers when deployments are necessary, and revamping our travel systems in support of deployments. Our Corps' Transformation will greatly enhance our ability to respond effectively to public health emergencies by developing a total force management approach to officer selections, training, readiness and assignments. The transformed Corps will be better able to deploy officers with the appropriate skill sets required to respond to the wide array of public health emergencies our Nation will face.

The recommendations contained within your report will assist us, working in collaboration with the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, in our goal of continuously improving our Department's response to public health emergencies and assuring that the Corps remains the Department's premier and primary deployable asset. Thank you for your Office's diligence and timeliness in the preparation of this report.


John O. Agwunobi